



Raising a Concern

What to do if a health and safety concern is identified

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This guidance can be downloaded from the www.usha.org.uk website.

INTRODUCTION

Engagement and partnership working are essential to good health and safety performance.

This template is an example of partnership and I and USHA would like to give thanks to our colleagues in HSE, UCEA, UCU, UNISON and UNITE who have given generously of their time to support the development of this template.

We hope that you find it of use.

Neil Budworth

Chair, Universities Safety and Health Association

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supporting partners



ESCALATION TEMPLATE

Partnership working between key stakeholders within the Higher Education sector is absolutely critical in achieving high standards of health and safety. Effective engagement between institutions, employees and trade unions is the bedrock of good safety. A high level of engagement between institutions, employees and trade unions is particularly effective if it is happening regularly as this allows early intervention to tackle emerging problems before they escalate.

In fact, world class health and safety standards can ONLY be achieved through high levels of engagement.

In many cases early informal engagement with the health and safety department or trade union safety representative can mean that issues are resolved and formal escalation of an issue is avoided.

However, a key element of this good engagement is ensuring clarity over how more substantive concerns regarding physical or psychological wellbeing should be raised and resolved in a constructive manner.

The early identification and resolution of an issue is sometimes the difference between a state of safety and harm occurring.

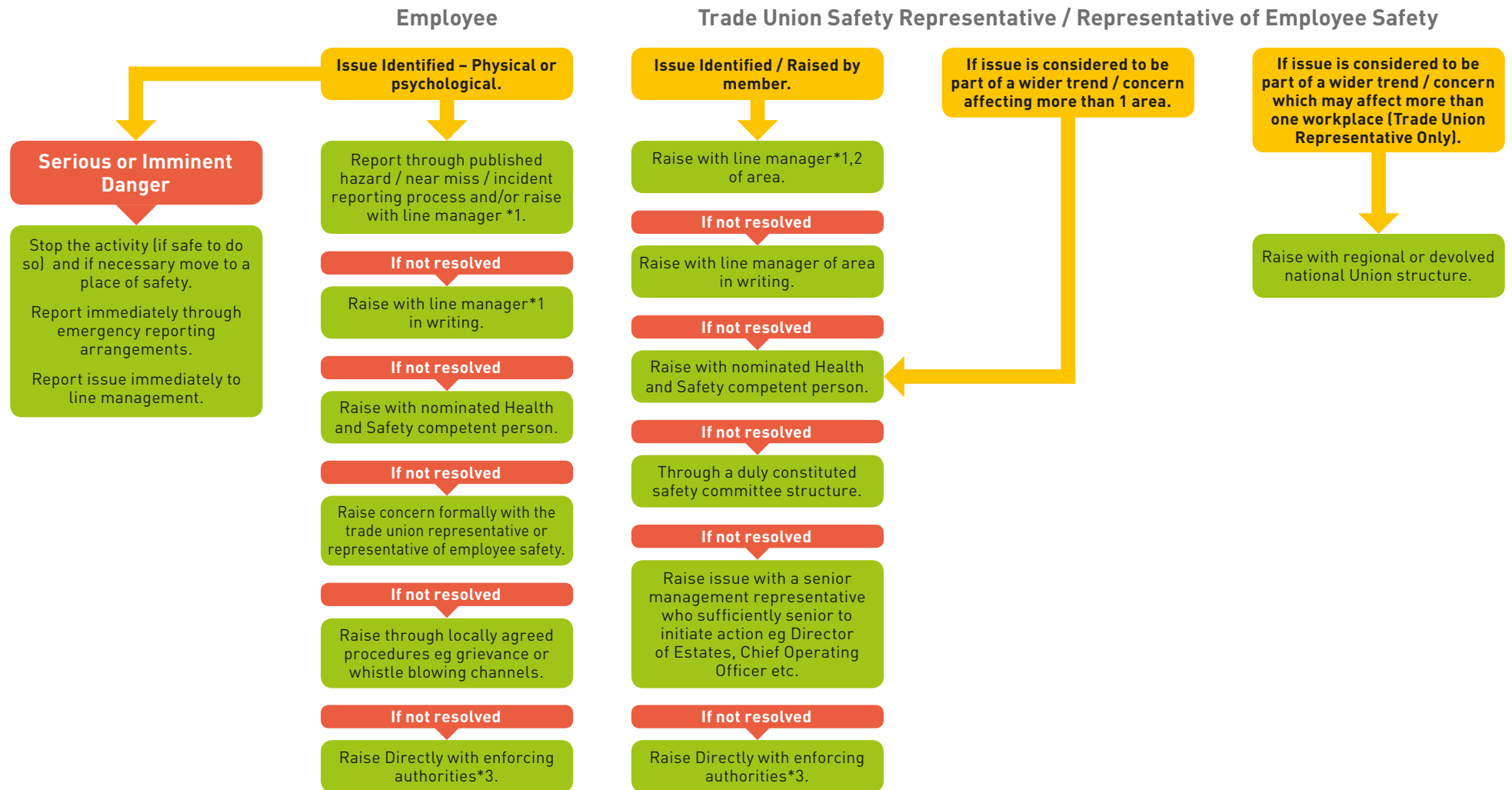
This document represents a typical escalation process which allows managers and institutions to reflect and remedy issues whilst ensuring that concerns can not be ignored and receive due attention.

Institutions are encouraged to consider this approach and in consultation with union colleagues agree a methodology which meets the same aims and reflects the needs of the institution and which, where appropriate, integrates with their existing arrangements (eg incident and near miss reporting, grievance and whistleblowing arrangements etc).

There are a few principles which may be considered when seeking to use this template:

- Line management should, wherever possible be given an opportunity to resolve an issue before an issue is escalated.
- No one should be put in a position where they are exposed to serious or imminent danger. If this did occur then the first urgent action must be to ensure the individual is safe.
- In cases when an individual is concerned, but is unclear about the severity or significance of the risk then individuals should be free to seek advice from an appropriate individual eg line manager, safety advisor or Union appointed Safety Representative.
- Issues should be recorded in existing systems (such as near miss or incident reporting systems) to ensure that trends and emerging issues can be identified.
- However, there may be circumstances where it is not appropriate to raise an issue with the line manager concerned and so an alternative more senior manager, or an alternative route through the Health and Safety team or HR may be appropriate.
- Circumstances may mean that a number of steps need to occur in rapid succession.
- Colleagues may seek support or clarification from more colleagues experienced or qualified in health and safety matters before raising a concern eg colleagues may wish to discuss their concerns with a more experienced trade union safety representative to ensure that they are tackling an issue in the most constructive manner.
- Similarly in some cases, it may be appropriate for union colleagues to issue advice proactively to the staff they represent who may be affected by a potential hazard. Wherever this happens it should be done in concert with the escalation process described in this document.

WHAT TO DO IF A HEALTH AND SAFETY CONCERN IS IDENTIFIED



***1 Note:** If the line manager is implicated in the issue then at this point it may be appropriate to raise with a more senior manager or HR contact. Employees who are union members may also wish to talk to their union representative before raising the issue with their line manager. Circumstances may dictate that a number of these steps may take place in rapid succession.

***2 Note:** It is noted that some union representatives may wish to seek guidance from more experienced branch representatives before proceeding.

***3 Note:** Raise directly with enforcing authority.

For safety reps – <https://www.hse.gov.uk/involvement/hsrepresentatives.htm>

For others – <https://www.hse.gov.uk/contact/concerns.htm>



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